

Three by pendragonfics

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Christmas Fluff, F/M, Female Reader, Teacher Reader, The Grinch - Freeform, Visiting Santa Claus

Language: English

Characters: Callahan (Stranger Things), Calvin Powell, Eleanor Gillespie, Eleven (Stranger Things), Florence "Flo" (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Reader

Relationships: Jim "Chief" Hopper/Reader, Jim "Chief" Hopper/You

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Summary:

You, a teacher at Hawkins Elementary, need a Santa Claus to come read to the kids. Chief Hopper steps in.

Three

Author's Note:

OH MY GOSH IT'S TWO DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS
SCR E E E C H

It didn't hurt that you already knew the guy, and on the odd occasion when you passed on the street, he'd say *hey*, _____, rather than just a nod, or tip of his hat. Well, everyone knew Chief Jim Hopper, he was the chief, and everyone loved him. But what did hurt was the fact that he was the only guy you could turn to for this kind of help. Being a single woman living in Hawkins didn't mean you had a wide choice anyway, and besides, it was only for five hours, and the other officers at the station could handle their own for that long. His secretary already signed him up for it as soon as you asked, and now, you're nervous. All because the other man who was going to play the part for your class came down with the flu.

And you needed it, because your class of first graders were still in their believing phase, and this time of year you didn't want to answer to thirty sets of parents upset their kid didn't get to meet him.

You barely looked at Chief Hopper when he came to your end of the staff room; all you did was hand him the bundle of clothes, and point him in the direction of where to change. You made sure that the other teachers kept the kids away from the area as to not suspect a thing. It had to be airtight.

"Are you in the suit yet?" You ask, knocking on the bathroom stall. You stand in the restroom, arms crossed. It's the male staff toilet, and like the children's toilets, it has its fair share of tile graffiti, and smells faintly of sock sweat. You remind yourself that it's all for the kids. Sucking up your pride, you knock once more. "Does it fit?"

The stall door opens. Chief Hopper *does* fit in the suit, which is good, considering you didn't have a backup plan otherwise. The pants are a little tight around his legs, and the red coat is loose around the midsection. He wears the same boots he came in wearing, big and black.

"It's...red." He says, looking in the bathroom mirror, and then back to you. He notices a bag where a bundle of fake facial hair and padding is, and adds, wiping a hand over his chin, "isn't this scruff enough for the kids?"

You shake your head. "They're six years old, Chief...it's just how he looks." You fish in the bag, grabbing the padding. It's from the Hawkins Community Theatre props, used for the annual nativity play to make the actress for Mary look the part. You move to the Chief, and pulling up Santa shirt, tie it on. "How's that?"

He looks a *little* like Santa.

He *harrumphs*. "What did Flo get me into?" He complains, but instead of taking the outfit off, throwing down his hat and going back to police work, he sighs, and starts to apply the fake beard to his face. "...so, _____," he starts to say, one part of the beard falling as he spoke, "What happened to the regular guy who does this?"

You shake your head. "He came down with the flu." He makes a noise, and before the next part to the fake beard droops off, you still it, catching it before it can fall. "Here, let me. When I was a kid, I used to watch the mall Santa's getting ready in the parking lot." You roll a little more adhesive to the facial hair, and press lightly against his cheek to stick it on. "Thanks again for coming, Chief, I don't know what I would have done..." you sigh, and rubbing your nose with the back of your wrist, you add, "It's a Christmas miracle."

He makes a noise. "Miracle my ass," he mutters. You start to work on the other side of the beard, and by the time it's stuck on, he's shoved the white wig on, and the hat too. "There."

Now he looks like Santa.

"Okay, great," you beam, dusting your hands off on your skirt, "So, you wait in the library, and I'll bring my kids in, and together we will read them the book. Don't break character, don't do anything that Santa Claus wouldn't do." You tell him. "Okay, so, the library is down the hall..."

By the time your class are in the library, Jim Hopper is already finding the suit to be hot. A little itchy. He isn't sure how many other people have worn the outfit, and doesn't want to know. But what he does know, upon seeing your class of twenty-something six-year-old children, is that he is nervous. He has thirteen-year-old Elle at home, and was a parent beforehand, so he isn't afraid of the kids. Maybe it's the costume. He looks like a fat man twice his age, and yet, as awkward as he feels, the kids look to him in awe.

"Grade one, I have a special guest for you," you tell your class, setting them onto the floor. "Santa Claus is here to read with me the story today. Everyone, say hello to Santa!" you say.

A mismatched chorus of *go-oood mo-orning san-ta claa-us* is vocalised, and every bit the part, Jim waved to the kids. "Good morning, girls and boys!"

You take a book from the shelf, and seat yourself beside him. "The story Santa and I are going to read to you if *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* by Dr Seuss. I need you to listen well, because it's very special that Santa could come *all* the way from the North Pole so close to Christmas to read with us today." She iterates, looking to him.

"Thank you for having me, first grade!" he says, every bit the part he'd imagine Santa Claus to sound like. "Now, let's begin the story!"

"Every Who down in Who-ville liked Christmas a lot," you began to read, holding the book as so the class could see the pictures, "But the Grinch, who lived just north of Who-ville did *not!*" Your voice went up and down with the rhymes, the poetry of the writing, and he listened intently just like the kids on the mat. "The Grinch *hated* Christmas! The whole Christmas season! Now, please don't ask why. No one quite knows the reason."

Jim really doesn't like Christmas. If Flo hadn't said it was for _____'s class, he'd never have come. As a kid, he'd never really liked Santa Claus. Maybe it was because the kids down the street got a bike from Santa, when all he got a new pair of sneakers for school. He'd never read the book, so he listens on, curious to hear about the creature called the Grinch who is set on taking away the festivities from the

Whos of Who-ville.

The rest of the half hour goes fast. He reads some parts of the book out, making sure to keep his voice just like Santa Claus, and when Mildred wet her pants, and began to cry, he took over reading for _____ and let her sort it out. When they come back, he gives all the kids a small candy cane, and listens as _____ reads the last part of the book.

“‘Maybe Christmas,’ he thought, ‘doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!’” you read to the class. At that, one child blinks, and another smiles at him. Then Jim realises it’s his turn to read, and you add, “Santa?”

He nods, and keeps reading, and turning to the last page, he says... “and he, *he himself*, The Grinch carved the roast beast.”

The fact that Chief Hopper left his hat behind at Hawkins Elementary isn’t the only reason you’re swinging by to the station after all your students have gone home. Maybe the reason that you were so stressed about the whole ordeal and having to ask the Chief wasn’t because you were being a pedantic teacher wanting to continue a tradition you’d held since taking post at your job. You weren’t sure, but nonetheless, come four thirty, and your classroom is tidy for tomorrow, and you’re walking in to the Hawkins police station with his hat in hand.

When you enter, Florence is on the phone, and waves you through. Callahan is talking to Mr. Saunders, a farmer, and Powell has an open police file on his desk, and a map. You don’t say a word to them, and sneak past to where you know the Chief’s office is.

Knocking on the door, you poke your head in.

He sits behind his desk, a smouldering cigarette jabbed into the dish by his typewriter. The open window pushes the curtains toward you in the doorway, reaching for you, almost. His eyebrows go from furrowed from a frown to releasing the lines on his forehead, accompanied by a smile.

“Found it in the staff room.” You hold it out to him, going to sit in the chair opposite.

He takes the hat, and places it on the desk before him, on top of a file you can’t read. “Thanks, _____,” he says, “You didn’t have to come all the way –,”

You shrug. “I live nearby, it’s not a problem.” You brush off. “The kids were really glad you came in today. I was talking to Eleanor Gillespie, when she came to pick up Debbie, and she said her daughter really enjoyed it.” You tell him. “Thanks for doing me a solid, Chief.”

He smiles at that. “Please, call me Jim,” he insists. “And it was nothing, really. Just helping out the local community.”

You nod. “Okay, thank you, Jim,” you say, going to stand, “Sorry, I’ve got to go, I’ve got a lot of marking to get done before the holidays...” you gather yourself, but before you can get to the door, you turn, and say, “Thanks once again, for helping out. Happy holidays.”

The walk out is as illustrious as the one in. Powell has moved the map he was looking at onto the pin board, where he’s taped string between points to look like a spider’s web. Callahan still talks to Mr. Saunders. Florence has hung up on the phone, and carries two mugs of coffee, despite the late hour in the afternoon.

“Merry Christmas, dear,” she says to you. You nod, and continue to your car, a second-hand 1970 Camaro with a ding on the passenger door.

But just as you get to the parking lot, you hear a bang, and turn around. Running out the door is Chief Jim Hopper, his face looking red after removing the fake beard, and the impromptu exercise. You sway where you stand, unsure what is going on. He comes to you, and says,

“I know you’re probably busy, or have plans, but...if you’re free tonight, Elle and I are watching *It’s A Wonderful Life* and eating frozen waffles,” he blurts out in between breathes, “I mean, as a way

to say thank you for everything –,”

You frown. “I didn’t –,”

He wipes a hand over his face. “I’m a jerk at the best of times, I know, just...” He looks to the concrete under his black boots, and then to you. “I just want to do something nice for you.”

You cross your arms. “Is this movie and waffles a date, or...?”

His face, if possible, turns even redder. “I – uh, um, not if you –,”

You chuckle, “I’ll be around at six.” At this moment, you feel a wash of bravery come over you, and in broad daylight, in the middle of the Hawkins police station carpark, you peck him on the cheap. “See you then, Jim.”

As your back is turned to unlock your car, you can’t see the look Jim Hopper has on his face. Elle would say it looks like he needs the toilet. His ex-wife would say he was having a heart attack. But no, none of those things were happening to him. Because right then, Jim Hopper, felt his heart grow three sizes. Just like The Grinch.

Author's Note:

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